

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

AI
Claim 1 (currently amended): A collaborative information system comprising a metadata-enhanced database (metabase) for recording data and related metadata providing details about the data and contributors of the data, the metadata ~~and for enabling a metabase user to assess the reliability of the data and the contributors of the data other metabase users based upon the metadata.~~

Claim 2 (original): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein the reliability of the data is assessed by evaluating the reliability of its contributors and the reliability of the contributors is assessed by evaluating the reliability of the data.

Claim 3 (original): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein the metabase is populated and maintained by the metabase users.

Claim 4 (original): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein the metabase comprises automated versioning means for tracking and maintaining a history of each datum recorded in the metabase.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein the metabase comprises notification means for notifying interested metabase users regarding ~~metabase changes~~ to metabase contents.

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Claim 6 (original): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein the metabase comprises information gathering means for obtaining information from various sources.

Claim 7 (original): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein the metabase comprises reliability assessment means for assessing the reliability of the data and the metabase users.

Claim 8 (original): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein the metabase comprises automated help means for resolving metabase user queries.

Claim 9 (original): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein the metabase comprises customizable retrieval means for enabling a metabase user to specify various criteria for retrieving data.

Claim 10 (original): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein the metadata comprises at least one of:

- user identification information;
- user personal information;
- user performance information;
- information characterization information;
- contributor information;
- source (citation) information;
- feedback information;
- implicit information;
- historical information;
- user rankings obtained from one or more ranking authorities;
- opinion information from contributors and users of the data regarding the reliability of the data and the users; and
- solicited information regarding the reliability of the data and the users.

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Claim 11 (original): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein the metabase comprises browser means for interacting with web-based entities.

Claim 12 (currently amended): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein the metabase uses an editable data markup language for creating and using the metabase, wherein the editable data markup language comprises:

means for defining [[a]] metabase ~~structure~~ structures;

means for editing [[the]] metabase ~~structure~~ structures;

means for contributing information to metabase ~~structure~~ structures;

means for retrieving information from [[the]] metabase ~~structure~~ structures;

means for combining data from multiple metabases; and

means for automatically updating one metabase from another metabase.

Claim 13 (canceled): A ranking authority for generating a user ranking based upon user contributions to a metadata-enhanced database, the ranking authority comprising:

means for evaluating the reliability of a user based upon metadata relating to the user's contributions to a metadata-enhanced database; and

means for generating a user ranking representing the reliability of the user; and

means for updating the user ranking based upon additional metadata.

Claim 14 (canceled): A metadata-enhanced robot for linking to a metadata-enhanced database, the metadata-enhanced robot comprising means for retrieving information from the metadata-enhanced database.

A2

Claim 15 (new): The collaborative information system of claim 4, wherein a metabase user is permitted to modify data contributed by another metabase user,

and wherein the history includes the original data and metadata identifying details about the modified data and its contributor.

A2
Claim 16 (new): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein a metabase user is permitted to modify metabase structures defined by the metabase user or another metabase user.

Claim 17 (new): The collaborative information system of claim 16, wherein the metabase user is permitted to create a new data field in the metabase.

Claim 18 (new): The collaborative information system of claim 16, wherein the metabase user is permitted to delete an existing data field from the metabase.

Claim 19 (new): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein a metabase user is permitted to create a new metabase.

Claim 20 (new): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein the metadata includes information regarding a contributor or data contributed by the contributor, the information provided explicitly by the contributor or obtained implicitly by the metabase.

Claim 21 (new): The collaborative information system of claim 1, further comprising:

a ranking authority for generating a user ranking representing the reliability of a contributor, the ranking authority evaluating the reliability of the contributor based upon metadata relating to the contributor's contributions to the metabase according to criteria provided by a metabase user.

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Claim 22 (new): The collaborative information system of claim 1, wherein the metabase includes metabase structures including tables and fields within the tables.
